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MEMORIAL

OF THE

NEW YORK COUNTY AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY,

FOR THE PROTECTION OF

NATIONAL INDUSTRY.

DECEMBER 15, 1820.

Referred to the Committee on Manufactures.

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MEMORANDUM

FOR THE RECORD

NATIONAL LABORATORY

MEMORIAL.

*To the Honorable the Senate and the House of Representatives of the
United States:*

The undersigned, appointed on behalf of the New York County Society for the promotion of agriculture and domestic manufactures, to memorialize Congress on the expediency of passing further laws to protect the productive industry of the nation from the pressure and encroachments of foreign competition,

RESPECTFULLY REPRESENT:

That, at a period when the representatives of the people are about to legislate on a great question of national policy, which involves the prosperity of the American nation at the present moment, as well as the welfare of posterity, it is the right and duty of every portion of the community to express their opinions to their public servants.

Your memorialists consider that agriculture is the grand source of national wealth; it forms the permanent basis that sustains the power of empires. That consumption, either at home or abroad, is its direct encouragement, and that its interests flourish in proportion to the demand extended for its products, are truths equally clear and equally sanctioned by universal assent.

Your memorialists are also impressed with a conviction, that the home market has innumerable advantages over a foreign market, when viewed in relation to agriculture. It is more certain, more various, more constant in its demands, upon the cultivators of the soil. Whatever hostile or selfish policy foreign powers may adopt, and whatever restrictions and prohibitions they may resort to, the internal prosperity of a country remains unimpaired, her energies vigorous, and her industry productive, when she is able to rely upon her own intrinsic resources. Under these considerations, it is the duty of every government, exercising dominion over a fertile and extensive soil, to keep in view the importance of encouraging and protecting the domestic market.

But your memorialists would not be understood as cherishing a hostile spirit towards foreign commerce, or a dependance on a fo-

reign market, when found compatible with national and general interests. While a foreign market extends a profitable demand for the products of agriculture, and sends back in return a balance of trade as an equivalent; when it tends to encourage the productive industry of a country and augments her power, her wealth, and her resources, it would indeed be culpable in her government wantonly and rashly to adopt measures which would diminish or destroy it. But the duties of a government become radically different, when this foreign market fluctuates with the ever-varying interests and caprices of foreign policy; when it is merely kept open from necessity and not from reciprocity, and diminishes as this necessity decreases; when, instead of remunerating agricultural pursuits, by an exchange that diffuses life, activity, and general prosperity—serving as an incentive to the more extensive and better cultivation of the soil, it breaks down productive labor, retards an advancement to national wealth, discourages application and enterprise in the useful arts, and renders a great people dependant on foreign skill and foreign indulgence for the commodities of domestic consumption; it becomes destructive to fundamental interests, and plunges a nation into a state of embarrassment, that, in the end, will reach every grade and class of society.

In the opinion of your memorialists, these remarks have an application to the present condition of the United States. We have a country, vast in resources, unrivalled in enterprise, unparalleled in skill and invention, and capable, not only of supplying herself, within the compass of her own natural means, with almost every article which comfort or even luxury can demand, but calculated to furnish food, clothing, and luxuries, to other countries, where the blessings of climate and soil are less munificently distributed. The different sections of the American Union seem destined to rely upon and to sustain each other. Whether we view the relative situation of the north and the south, or the east and the west, the same indissoluble connexion, the same physical dependance, is perceptible. Vast rivers, immense inland seas, and natural routes for roads, form the channels and mediums for trade, exchange, and distribution. And yet, with a soil capable of clothing and feeding more than an hundred millions of people, it is not to be concealed, that this country does not supply her own wants in articles of the most ordinary use—that she can no longer obtain them in exchange for her raw materials, and that their introduction deprives her of a great portion of her circulating capital. Nor is it to be denied, that, while her foreign markets are inadequate to the consumption of her agricultural products, from the enforcement of hostile prohibitions and restraints, her home market is unprotected, the fruits of her soil wasting away in her granaries, her people in debt, thousands out of employ, her revenue failing and the pressure of embarrassment every where visible. Posterity may not believe in the fidelity of this picture, but it cannot be denounced, while the voice of universal distress is so loud and deep as it is at the present moment.

It is vain to indulge in retrospection, or to search for objects of censure and condemnation :—rather does it become a sagacious and powerful people to look forward to systematic means of alleviation. And it does appear to your memorialists, that the period has arrived when the American government should adopt a stable course of internal and external policy, calculated to unfold and cherish the resources, increase the wealth, and promote the lasting welfare, of the nation. That policy which is the best calculated to guard and promote the productive labor of the country is the one which deserves the most speedy and rigid adoption. By productive labor, we mean that industry, which, in the end, will produce the most solid and specific advantages to the whole community, from the same efforts. No matter whether the avails be direct or indirect—final results are to be looked at.

Your memorialists would appeal to your honorable body, and call your attention to foreign markets, as taken in connection with our future prosperity. The prospects of the nation, in this point, present nothing cheering to the great mass of the people. It cannot be denied that the staple articles of the south, although they still find an extensive sale, are subject to a growing competition, from the protection of colonial interests, and the new intercourse opened with some parts of South America, and have undergone a vast reduction in their former prices. As we turn to the section of the Union north of the Potomac, we find our staples excluded from the most profitable markets of the globe, and commanding a sale that affords no profit. The commercial relations of the world are changed; national interests are flowing into new channels, designated from motives of self protection; and nations are depending upon the cultivation of their own resources. The prospect of a commercial revolution, which will enable us to hail a more auspicious era in our affairs, is not likely to ensue. Indeed, for a nation like our own, fertile in resources, to look with an ardent gaze on the lighting up of a war in Europe, with the hope of gathering spoils from the conflagration, with the hope of reaping pecuniary gain from the miseries and desolations of mankind, is unworthy of an enlightened and humane people, and disgraceful to the spirit of a free government, founded on the diffusion of happiness and equal rights. The question then occurs, if foreign markets fail to extend a competent and profitable market for our raw materials, and the demand for the staple products of the soil is liable still to be diminished, whether it is wise and prudent to rely on the industry of foreign nations to clothe us, to furnish articles of defence, and administer to our luxuries, while we command the means of answering our wants, and millions of capital, and thousands of people, are out of employ? While, then, foreign luxuries and articles of foreign production are impoverishing the people, and their fabrication at home would extend the sale of our raw materials, and go far to relieve the distresses of the community, your memorialists are impressed with the belief that it is now the duty of the National Legis-

lature to protect every branch of national industry, by laying restraints on foreign competition in our own markets. It is not for us to dictate to the government and call for specific measures, now, when the collective wisdom of the nation is competent to decide, and must decide, what they shall be; but your memorialists hope that they will be bold, strong, and positive, in their effects, and that their adoption will be immediately resorted to.

Such a course of policy, in the apprehension of your memorialists, would exclude the introduction of foreign commodities, as far as it is pernicious, open a home market for our own productions, both in the raw and manufactured state, promote an internal exchange between the farmer and mechanic, between every department of industry, as well as between different sections of the Union, and retain and circulate our capital in the country. The capital now invested in manufactories, which, to a great extent, remains idle and unproductive, would be called into employment, many thousands of useful people, now sharing in the miseries of the times, converted to an industrious and useful population, and a new field opened for the ingenuity of the American citizen. It is to be regretted that the state of the country has hitherto prevented that division of agricultural labor, which would prove congenial to the soil, and profitable to the cultivator. Instead of bestowing so much toil upon the raising of grain, which now finds no market, should we wear American, instead of foreign cloths, the raising of sheep, and the growing of flax, would become of the first importance. A new demand would also be created for beef, mutton, pork, and other provisions.

Your memorialists would observe, that the Board of Agriculture of the state of New York, to which the New York County Society is attached, embraces the encouragement of domestic manufactures, as well as the cultivation of the soil; and it is to be deeply lamented that any attempts have been made to separate these two great national interests. Commerce, agriculture, and manufactures, in the United States, are indissolubly connected, and whoever plants the seeds of jealousy, hostility, and disunion, between them, aims a deadly blow at the vitals of the country. A state of general prosperity, or a state of general embarrassment and ruin, will, sooner or later, reach every condition and every pursuit of society; and the condition of the whole community should, therefore, be kept steadily in view.

In memorializing your honorable body, the local position of the city and county of New York has fallen under consideration. While the advantages of this emporium for extensive foreign commerce are duly appreciated, we can never forget that vast and fertile inland territory, with whose flourishing or unprosperous condition the fortunes of the city of New York are intimately connected. The present embarrassments of the western section of the country are too evident at the present moment to require details or description. It is needless to dilate on the immediate effects which a change of national policy, as contemplated by your memorialists, would have upon this part of the Union.

Your memorialists conclude, with the prayer, that the Congress of the United States will adopt immediate measures to protect the productive industry of the nation.

JNO. SWARTWOUT.
W. FEW.
MAT. L. DAVIS.
CHARLES G. HAINES.
TH. R. SMITH.
RALPH HALL.
JOHN W. WYMAN.

